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**FERNALD LIVING HISTORY PROJECT**  
**Transcript**

Name: Rob Portman

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**Tape FLHP0247**

01:01:16

Q:

Okay, first of all if you could just give us your name and spell it.

A:

I'm Rob Portman, it's Rob R-O-B and Portman, P-O-R-T-M-A-N and I'm the Congressman for the Second District of Ohio, which includes all or parts of five counties in Southwest Ohio including Adams County, Brown County, Clermont County, about half of Warren County and then about half of Hamilton County.

A:

That includes all the Eastern part of Hamilton County and then the district line goes up above Cincinnati and takes in part of western Hamilton County. Including Crosby Township and therefore including most of the Fernald plant.

01:01:54

Q:

Great, now um, you toured Fernald shortly after your election in '93 and ah, what was your first impression of the plant?

A:

Well, actually my first impression of Fernald ah, was during the election. In 1993, Bill Gradison who represented this district for about 18 years unexpectedly resigned from Congress and there was a special election to be held. There were 10 of us in the Republican primary, which was ah, about a five or six week sprint uh, and during that time period in 1993, early 1993 ah, I went out to the site.

01:02:31

A:

I went to a meeting ah, between ah, FRESH and ah, at that time the contractor that the labor unions was involved and some other interested citizens and so, I got an early exposure to the issues at Fernald and to the various parties who had a stake in what was gonna happen at Fernald.

01:02:50

A:

And that was even before the election. Ah, I stayed in touch with folks who were there at that meeting, ah, including Lisa Crawford. Who I think just about at that time was heading up to Washington to the inaugural of President Clinton, ah, I'm sorry that would have been a year previous, she'd gone to the inaugural of President Clinton, I think at the request of Al Gore.

01:03:10

A:

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And so, ah, there was an interesting political element to the FRESH group at that time and ah, I, I learned quite a bit about the issues therefore even before I even got elected. Ah, and got some good exposure to the issues mostly through FRESH. Which has been a group I've worked with very closely ah, over the last six and a half years since that fateful day in January of 1993.

01:03:33

A:

But then once elected I did go back out to the site, took a formal tour as a member of Congress and was able to see ah, the plant ah, as it was then. It had not produced any uranium since 1989, this was 1993 and yet ah, about, I'd say 90 percent of the federal funds at that point were going towards maintenance and upkeep of the existing plant.

01:03:58

A:

And ah, about ten percent of the federal funds were being used for actual cleanup. And that was my ah, major concern frankly when I got elected was the fact that Fernald was on a very long time frame for cleanup. It was said to be 25 years which would be roughly 2020 ah, there was virtually, I thought, no attention being given to the actual cleanup of the facility.

01:04:24

A:

Ah, getting rid of the hazardous materials ah, for the safety of the surrounding area ah, moving ahead with a cleanup. Now, you know, the plant was no longer producing ah, the uranium or producing anything for the Department of Energy or for our military.

01:04:41

A:

And finally from a taxpayer perspective, it seemed to me to be awfully silly that we were spending 90 percent of the federal money, which at that time was about 200 million dollars a year, on maintenance and upkeep of the facility.

01:04:52

A:

Of something that was no longer useful to the taxpayers and really should have been cleaned up. Um, so my big push from the time I got elected, working closely with FRESH, ah, working with the Department of Energy, working with the contractor, was try to figure out ways to change that. So that the federal funds, the taxpayer monies were going into actual cleanup.

01:05:12

A:

And ah, enhance cleanup. Ah, one of the other great advantages to faster cleanup of course other than the fact that you get rid of hazardous materials from the area ah, is the cost to the taxpayer. We believe that **by expediting the cleanup we have saved ah, millions of dollars to the taxpayer. In fact, we think that by moving it from that, it was a 25 year time frame, to about a 11-or 12-year time frame, we've saved about \$3 billion** to the taxpayer.

01:05:40

A:

And I believe we're now on track for cleanup by 2006, again that's as compared to 2020, ah, or thereabouts and saving the taxpayer about \$3 billion and also ah, you know, cleaning the site up and

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getting rid of the material that was very dangerous and still is dangerous to the surrounding area. So, I've really enjoyed working on this project.

01:06:04

A:

Ah, I will say when I first got elected I was advised by other people who'd been involved in Fernald, gee Rob, you really can't do much to affect it ah, it can be a dangerous ah, situation to get involved in politically, better to just kind of stay away. And ah, I took the opposite attack, which was to try to learn all I could about it and to work closely with the people who were involved.

01:06:24

A:

I think folks were a little bit skeptical at first, as to my interest. Ah, some people didn't agree with, with my approach, I'm sure some people still don't, ah, in that I thought faster cleanup was better. There were obviously ah, people who were employed at the plant who were operational people, who ah, would lose their jobs through a cleanup.

01:06:44

A:

There were additional people of course who because of the cleanup were able to get more work um, so it was a mix and ah, I mean, to this day I suppose there are some, some folks who, who wish the cleanup weren't going as rapidly because it does involve a loss of jobs and there are other people who think that faster cleanup could be dangerous. Um, but my sense all along was it was best to push the process, make sure it was safe, but make sure that the federal money was actually going toward cleanup and not simply maintaining the status quo.

01:07:13

A:

Ah, I've probably given you more of an answer than you expected in that, that question. But I really have enjoyed working with Fernald. Lisa Crawford, ah, Pam Dunn, ah, Edwa um, these are all people who have actually become friends of mine through this process. And I see them in Washington, I see them in Crosby Township. Ah, we'll have meetings in this office periodically here in Cincinnati.

01:07:40

A:

And ah, it's, it's been a good experience. I think if, if I could um, give any advice to whoever succeeds me it is to um, continue to be involved. Ah, I may or may not be in this job in the year 2006, I hope I am to be able to celebrate, but there will be a massive effort after that to be able to ensure that the area is used properly.

01:08:01

A:

And I happen to believe that there is an opportunity here to develop not only ah, maybe some light industrial use or something else for parts of it, but for the parts um, somewhat contaminated still um, to set those aside, but then to have a park on part of the land ah, a park with trails that's accessible to people, that people can have access to. Um, that to me is very exciting, I think there is some real good to come

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out of that. I also think it would be great to have a museum there that documents what happened.

01:08:34

A:

That documents the Cold War, documents why the plant was important. What mistakes were made, in particular in regard to allowing the emission of too much ah, uranium and other ah, hazardous materials into the surrounding area.

A:

And ah, you know, I think there will, even after the cleanup phase is completed there will continue to be opportunities to work with Fernald and the surrounding area to make sure that the site is properly maintained and that it has the right mix to be able to commemorate what happened in Crosby Township.

01:09:09

Q:

Great, great and um, obviously you're, you're pretty well versed in ah, the history of the plant. How did you educate yourself on all that?

A:

Well, ah, lots of ah, discussions and briefing books, there, if you want to get informed about Fernald there's plenty of material out there that Department of Energy is actually great at providing that. If I had more time I could do even more reading about it. Ah, in gosh, about 1997 or 8 ah, there were a number of criticisms of the contractor and of the Department of Energy ah, by the *Cincinnati Enquirer*.

01:09:45

A:

A series of articles were written and as a result of those articles there was a lot of consternation about whether the cleanup was proceeding properly, particularly about vitrification. Ah, but there was four or five specific areas that ah, ah, at least to the *Cincinnati Enquirer* and their reporter thought were shortcomings.

01:10:04

A:

And I initiated a process and was joined by I think three of my colleagues ah, in Congress um, to have the General Accounting Office review all the allegations and generally review the cleanup of where we were. That document is very valuable and I've read through that and that frankly helped me to understand better ah, even what was happening while I was in Congress and as important when it proceeded me.

01:10:28

A:

Ah, then there is, again through the Department of Energy ah, lots of material on not just what's happened but ah, projections into the future. Contractor's been very helpful in keeping me informed on the technology on what their plans are. Ah, again, having accelerated the cleanup there was a need to bring some new thinking to the table as to how to ah, embark on some issues that were unprecedented. Vitrification is one of course that we're still struggling with.

01:10:59

A:

Um, how to handle some of the most hazardous material and one silo in particular but these are, there's

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plenty of material out there ah, I also happen to be lucky to have one person on my staff ah, Tim Miller who's in Washington, who'd worked for Bill Gradison years ago and was somewhat familiar with the site because of that.

01:11:18

A:

And Tim is a pretty senior ah, Washington hand and he's been able to be helpful to me and working through some of the Department of Energy ah, in funding issues. One of the things of course that I go through every year with Fernald is trying to ensure that we have adequate funding for the cleanup and as I said earlier it's a substantial amount of money.

01:11:36

A:

This year we got about \$280 million into the federal budget just for Fernald. Ah, that means more money will go to Fernald during my tenure in Congress than every other place in my district combined. Ah, direct funding, and that is something that has to be fought for because every year there are other sites around the country and other uses for those funds for good purposes ah, where people are, are competing for the same money.

01:12:04

A:

So, Tim has helped me with that process, which is not so much an education about what happened at Fernald or what's happening there, but how the federal budgeting process works and to be sure that we have the administration making a substantial request with regard to the overall cleanup figure for the Department of Energy and specifically on Fernald and in Congress to make sure that I'm working with the appropriation subcommittees and then the full committee to be sure we have adequate funding.

01:12:30

A:

And this has been again, a great success in the sense we've been able to increase funding over time um, we've been able to keep it, ah, the funding level at a high enough level for accelerated cleanup. And the argument that I've made consistently is that this will save the taxpayer money over time from a budget perspective and from a health and safety perspective will enable that area ah, to be cleaned up more rapidly so that it's safer for the environment.

01:12:54

A:

You don't have the leaching into the water table and other airborne pollutants and other problems continuing as long. So, so far so good ah, we've got to keep the pressure on in order to meet our 2006 objective, we need to have at least that level of funding, we believe, going forward, ah, for the next six or seven years. And the budgets are tight right now so it's, it's a challenge.

01:13:17

A:

But that's one of the things that I also feel has been a success for Fernald. We've been able to keep the federal funding at a high enough level despite all the competition for funds and ah, ensure that our cleanup can stay on schedule.

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01:13:30

Q:

That's great, that's wonderful. Um, that was my next question so you answered my next question (laughing).

A:

(Laughing) Sorry for jumping ahead.

Q:

Have you ever worked with any of the other DOE sites in the complex at all?

01:13:44

A:

In the complex meaning?

Q:

The DOE, like Rocky Flats or Hanford or any of those?

A:

Oh – no I, I haven't. There's a group of members of Congress who represent those areas who ah, I consult with periodically and that's been helpful. Ah, I consider Fernald to be the model plant in the country and the model cleanup. And ah, we want to make sure we continue to be that and you know, it's partly because of the successes we've had working with the community um, partly because of the size of the facility.

01:14:13

A:

It's not as big as for instance Rocky Flats um, Savannah River, um, Hanford, there's some bigger, frankly more complicated cleanups and ours is one where I've always argued with the Department of Energy that it would be great to have one success story. Because they don't have a lot of success stories in terms of cleanup. Either in terms of the cost or the actual cleanup.

01:14:36

A:

And ah, I believe again, that that's been one of the reasons for our success is that we've been able to argue persuasively that we've got our act together. That we've got a, an obtainable task here um, yes we've got challenges and problems but when you compare us to the other sites, boy we're in pretty darn good shape. Um, I know you're probably gonna ask me a question that could lead to this, but let me just mention something while, while we're on the topic of how Fernald differs from the other sites.

01:15:02

A:

When I first got elected, again I toured the site and got some sense of the dynamics between the citizens group called FRESH and the community, the township trustees and so on, the contractor and DOE; and ah, I thought it was a healthy dialogue. Sometimes ah, confrontation is necessary in these situations and sometimes there was confrontation as you know.

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01:15:27

A:

Um, I also thought it was good that there was ah, such involvement from the people who lived in the area not just ah, being concerned about ah, the potential for their kids and neighbors and their own health needs but also constructively understanding how the cleanup operates and being engaged in the process.

01:15:51

A:

What I didn't realize is how unique that is around the country. Ah, what we've been able to do at Fernald through the, I think it's the called the Citizens Advisory Task Force, is that, is that right?

Q:

Yeah, I think they call it now Citizens Advisory Board.

A:

Citizens Advisory Board which includes FRESH but also includes represent-, representatives of, experts from our area, from the University of Cincinnati, experts on cleanup and the um, the aspects of the ah, environmental health problems. Um, what we've been able to do by coming together as a group and building a consensus and then going to the federal government as a group, you know, we don't all agree, but we have a general consensus from the representatives, um, me and others, um, the elected officials meeting.

01:16:40

A:

The ah, community, FRESH, the Citizens Advisory group, the contractor and going as a whole and saying, look you know, we're willing to live with a certain amount of uncertainty into the future in exchange for a faster cleanup. As you know, you can come up with scenarios where the cleanup has to be so pristine or so pure that the cost is extremely high and the cleanup time is extremely long as compared to being able to live with a little uncertainty and being able to live with, frankly, some of the site not being used for residential purposes or, or school purposes.

01:17:21

A:

Where you can literally set aside some of the premises um, because we came together with a plan like that um, it was much easier for me to go for the funding. It was much easier for DOE to agree to the accelerated cleanup and that separates us from these other sites. Ah, again talking to folks who represent these other areas, they don't have that kind of consensus building that has gone on and I really commend the community for doing that.

01:17:50

A:

And it's FRESH and it's other community leaders who have gotten involved, who frankly, you know, have taken somewhat of a risk by doing this rather than um, simply protesting the ah, ah, the legitimate pollution problems that are out there and some of the lapses in vitrification and so on are, are raising criticism and concerns instead while doing that, these groups have also come together constructively to move the process forward.

01:18:20

A:



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So, I see that as a huge advantage for us and in the end ah, we're gonna have I think, a site that will be accessible to people I hope. We can open up a park and some trails and we'll have a museum there and we'll be able to get this sad chapter, ah, which is the ah, the chapter of the plant shutdown, loss of employment and then the pollution and the health effects on the workers.

01:18:43

A:

Ah, we'll be able to move on from that providing proper restitution, providing um, the community with the proper guarantees ah, as compared to having this site fester and problems continue.

Q:

Great, and um, a lot of the issues at Fernald, you know, before the accelerated cleanup plan was put in place, ah, now are sort of solved. Can you sort of address some of the issues that, that were problems that you see solved by an accelerated cleanup plan?

01:19:22

A:

Well one of the major problems that I saw, my first visit there was that we had ah, a lot of the hazardous materials stored ah, in the facility; some of which was under roof, some of which was not, some of which was in ah, drums. And there was as you know, a good deal of monitoring, we were, you know, paying a lot of again, taxpayer's funding to have somebody walk around and literally check the drums every day.

01:19:53

A:

And there was just a lot of danger inherent um, with that kind of storage, you know. We continued to have a major problem with the, ah, the storage that is on site, ah, particularly the silos. And to get that off-site, to get it ah, to a safe facility in the case of Nevada where it can be stored, or to get it to some other facility that can handle the hazardous waste or to get it into one of the pits that is low-level, um there on site, where because of the technology that I've had explained to me that I don't understand frankly (chuckles) but it seems to be very safe.

01:20:31

A:

Um, even on site it's a much safer place. And so by accelerating cleanup ah, we've made it safer for the workers who are there, we've made it safer for the community and again it was kind of a festering problem that's not solved yet and will never be totally solved. But ah, has improved dramatically I think by just moving ahead with actually getting rid of this stuff and tearing down buildings and, and moving forward.

01:20:56

A:

Ah, speaking of tearing down buildings I will tell you one of the um, more humorous moments during my time representing this district was when I went out to Fernald ah, one weekend day as I recall, I think it was on a Saturday. Where with great fanfare we were going to use, the federal government was going to use the latest technology in terms of um, imploding a building.

01:21:22

A:

Ah, to ah, tear down one of the large structures at Fernald, building number (Comment: 7) Building 7.

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And there I was, ah, having helped get the media there (laughing) and with the media and with the Assistant Secretary of Energy ah, with the Citizens Advisory group and FRESH and all of us where there.

01:21:50

A:

And this was to be ah, you know, kind of a new start for Fernald and we were gonna tear this thing down and I can just recall standing there watching with the cameras rolling ah, watching us watch this, when the explosions went off and the building instead of falling kind of tilted slightly to the left and um, it was a little embarrassing. I think it was very embarrassing for the contractor, the subcontractor for the explosives, the Department of Energy and so on.

01:22:16

A:

Um, but ah, in the end many of us had to just kind of smile about it, you know, here we go again. So, we've had our ups and downs frankly. This has not been a perfect cleanup, it's not been a perfect process. There hasn't always been the communication there should have been, but in the end we seem to be getting the job done through consensus and, and comparing like I said earlier to other sites ah, which is sometimes a good perspective for me because I can get a little discouraged sometimes.

01:22:46

A:

And I compare it to what's going on with these other sites around the country I realize we've done a lot right. And ah, if we can stay on track, keep the federal funds coming ah, keep our focus and be sure the safety is adhered to at the site during that process, you know, we should have at the end something to be proud of.

01:23:04

Q:

Wonderful, thank you. That's great. I think a lot of people don't, we haven't really talked to a lot of people about the accelerated cleanup schedule, so this is wonderful. I mean a lot of the retirees of course, don't really know a lot of that. Ah, Lisa had talked about it some, but you, you see it from an insiders point of view from Washington which is different and I think that's really great.

01:23:24

A:

Well yeah, I, I have less familiarity with the technology and with the science than a lot of people you're gonna interview and I, I frankly on vitrification, I tried very hard to understand it and all the new \_\_\_\_\_ between the glass and the cement and all the different ah, other than Tim Miller again in Washington, who helps keeps me up on that, I have a hard time frankly keeping up with some of the ah, some of the detailed technical issues.

01:23:51

A:

Um, but I don't do that as my job frankly. I mean, to a certain extent we have to trust the experts on that, but what I do what to ensure happens is that we don't get off track um, in terms of the cleanup for any reason other than a safety reason. If there was a safety problem ah, I would be the first one to say we need to stop, see where we are, back up.

01:24:14

A:

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But um, in the meantime I'm gonna try hard to keep the federal funding at a high enough level to ensure that the area gets cleaned up and communication has improved and I think it has ah, between the various parties of the stake. And then in the end there's something we can be proud of in terms of the cleanup. And I want to be helpful in the post cleanup too, as I said, if I'm still in this office or whoever is in terms of being sure there is some kind of federal funding for ah, the right kind of land use for that area.

01:24:44

Q:

Great, great. And ah, let's talk a little bit about waste shipping. I'm sure that you've had contact with the trustees, and the surrounding areas and when they decided to go ahead and start shipping waste, um, what kind of issues did you have to deal with at that point?

01:24:56

A:

Well, there's a lot of concern. Ah, I've also dealt with it in regard to some of the problems on the shipments to Nevada. Ah, the Nevada delegation in Congress is not really happy with us, you know. They'd just soon not have the waste first and second ah, there was some leakage a couple of years ago that was of grave concern to them.

01:25:18

A:

And ah, so they come back to me and, you know, I have to say to them, gee I have to look into it because I'm not, I'm not shipping waste. I'm not involved in that process but whatever happens at Fernald is sort of, because it's in my district um, to a certain extent I, I, I have to bear some responsibility for it.

01:25:40

A:

So that's been a worthy issue for me. I think the local trustees are really comforted about what's happened from what I can tell. I haven't had a lot of expression concerned to me recently. But there was a lot of concern initially, and there always will be when you're shipping that kind of stuff through neighborhoods with kids and schools and buildings that have people working during the day and offices, homes ah, but the bigger problem I've run into recently is the ah, really the Nevada side of it.

01:26:08

A:

And to be sure what leaves Fernald is properly packaged so that when it reaches its destination it has ah, you know, no leaks, it has the integrity of the, of the proces-, of the ah, the transportation process um, and that's, that's something I think again, that we've made some progress on from what I understand from talking to the contractor and talking to DOE.

01:26:31

A:

But we've got to be darn sure that we're very careful with ah, with, with the shipping of this waste. We also have to be concerned from a federal perspective about where this waste is going. There is some effort underway in Congress um, has been to shut down some of these sites that are collecting waste.

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A:

And I understand that. If they were in my district I probably wouldn't be too happy about it either, but as a country we need to decide ah, you know, how we're going to dispose of these wastes and better in my view to have them in a safe place ah, where because of the geology, ah, because of the soil conditions ah, and because of the ah, the density population; meaning there aren't many people who live in, in the area. There are certain areas that are better to store these wastes than others.

01:27:19

A:

And Nevada happens to have some ah, some good sites. There are other sites around the country but I think it would be a big mistake for us to shut down those sites and to have this very dangerous ah, waste with a long half life stored in various places around the country where we don't have ah, ah, the kind of again topography ah, there's a danger in our area believe it or not of an earthquake they say.

01:27:43

A:

I mean, there is a fault line that runs near us and so you wouldn't, you know, we don't have that kind of soil, we don't have the kind of monitoring here that you really need so. That's one thing that I do keep an eye on and I work on in Washington is just to be sure that there's a place for this to go.

01:27:56

A:

Ah, and a safer place. It can be consolidation of waste and again I understand that there are differing points of view on that, but I would hate to see us in a situation we'd have to store here on site at Fernald, some of the most dangerous waste because we're really aren't equipped to do that.

01:28:14

Q:

Good, good – do you want to switch tapes?

(Tape cuts out)

**TAPE FLHP0248**

02:01:04

A:

Hmm-hmm.

Q:

You know, so it's. They've done a really wonderful job re-educating and re-training.

A:

That's great.

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Q:

Yeah, yeah, now that we're part of Fluor Corporation too, they're trying to move people into different, you know, that's the largest engineering company in the world.

A:

Yeah.

02:01:20

Q:

So there's jobs in other places that they can move some of these folks; re-train them and move them into those places, success stories. And so, okay, are you rolling?

(Cameraman: yeah)

Q:

Great, um, something that I'd like to address is some of the ah, when you first ah, came to Fernald, and, and how you may have dealt with some of the organizations, community organization's mistrust of the government and also of ah, of ah Fernald officials and those types of things.

02:01:51

A:

Hmm-hmm, well ah, a little healthy distrust is not such a bad thing (laughing). Um, you know, I was not very trustful of the Department of Energy in particular, and the contractor sometimes ah, initially because one of the things I thought they weren't putting much focus on Fernald. Um, I felt the DOE presence was inadequate initially at Fernald. I felt the staffing even in Washington in terms of the cleanup staff and the commitment to cleanup was not adequate.

02:02:22

A:

I felt the, there was some turnover that certain ah, I won't say promises, but expectations were raised and then they were changed. I think we made a lot of progress. Again it ain't perfect and there's still gonna be communications issues but um, I think it took a little focus from everybody including the citizen's groups and FRESH in particular.

02:02:44

A:

Early on to try to get them more focused on the site and sometimes the squeaky wheel gets the grease and ah, there had to be some squeaking. In terms of the contractor ah, I think there's been some major improvements over time. The communication was not good when I first got involved. The first meeting I attended before I was elected to Congress ah, was more of ah, debate or a shouting match at times than it was a meeting.

02:03:11

A:

Because there was not trust between the parties and that had, that was a result of ah, things that had happened prior to my getting involved that I couldn't fully appreciate or understand. But I think there needed to be some changes in personnel as well as practices, at which there were. I think it's a constant

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challenge for a company to understand that it has a community responsibility.

02:03:36

A:

That it, when it's involved in a site like this that is federally funded ah, which the taxpayers are paying for, which the government activity that they're cleaning up, that they have a responsibility that goes well beyond what they might do in the private sector or the cleanup or an engineering project or a construction project. So there's always challenges, but I think they've done a pretty good job ah, not initially.

02:03:59

A:

But after a couple of years, which would be what, in the last four or five years of bridging that gap. The distrust ah, again, you know, isn't all together bad either because this is very dangerous ah, material we're talking about and a mistake um, on a construction site that might lead to some design changes, different than a mistake in a cleanup that might lead to the emission of some dangerous substance.

02:04:28

A:

And, you know, like the radioactive material that, that ah, can leach into the, into the well water through the underground ah, aquifer under Fernald. So, these are big deal issues and there's major concerns and there should be. I've played, ah, at times sort what of a role of a facilitator so kind of getting beat up by both sides because again the focus I think um, has been moving forward.

02:05:00

A:

And to the extent we can solve problems, we can solve them and move forward to the extent we can. Maybe personnel changes were necessary, maybe practices needed to be changed and I think some of that happened. I'm not saying it's perfect but I, I think the people involved and I'm not one of them, I'm not involved in day-to-day, but the Lisa Crawfords of the world, the ah, the ah, people who headed up the site at various times, the DOE personnel who've been involved um, have worked hard to improve communications, address the problems and move the whole process forward.

02:05:30

Q:

Great, (interviewee coughs: excuse me) um, so tell us a little bit about your job (Comment: do you have any water?) when you're in Washington, how are you, how are you working to continue funding for this project?

A:

Take just one break here.

Q:

Oh, okay, sorry.

(Tape cuts out and begins again)

02:05:46

Q:

Um, yeah, if you could just tell us, you know, what your job is like in trying to continue funding for the

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cleanup efforts.

A:

Well, it's kind of a three stage process. Ah, and every year we go through it. We're getting pretty good at it, at least in the process. One is you go to the administration and encourage them to put into the budget that comes from the President to Congress ah, an adequate amount for the Fernald cleanup. There's a general category within the Department of Energy, I think it's called Environmental Management.

02:06:16

A:

EMA account I think it's called and that number has to be big enough in the aggregate so that Fernald as an individual site can be taken care of, if we work on that. The next level is at the subcommittee of the Appropriations Committee. In the House side that subcommittee staff and the subcommittee chairman have gotten to be ah, friends through this process and we work with them and explain to them why we think Fernald is so important.

02:06:43

A:

I usually try to speak directly to the people involved and, and often I'll speak on the floor of the House even, when it comes up ah, for, for a vote. The third process is the Appropriations Committee itself, the full committee. And then you ah, then you go into, I guess to other levels which is the Senate side needs to put its funding in.

02:07:03

A:

Generally that's a general aggregate number. Then in the Conference Committee between the House and the Senate you come up with a number. Then it goes to the President for his signature or his veto and we work at that level too.

02:07:14

A:

Generally speaking the President vetos or signs this overall legislation for reasons that have nothing to do with Fernald, even nothing to do with the Department of Energys ah, Environmental Cleanup or management account. But, you know, it's in our interest to make sure it gets through.

02:07:30

A:

And again, we've had good success. I think it's fair to say in keeping the number high enough ah, to keep to our cleanup targets ah, sometimes people have, they're concerned year to year that there's some variation, which is a huge problem. And one of the things that I've tried to do is to get our appropriators to think ahead a little bit.

02:07:51

A:

Because if you have a certainty of know that you're going to have for instance a three year funding stream at a certain amount, then you can put in place some very aggressive cleanup knowing that it's gonna be

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there. If you have to wait every year to hear what the number's going to be, it's much more difficult to make the progress we're trying to make cause you stop and start, stop and start.

02:08:07

A:

So, continuity of funding is as important to me in some ways as the level of funding. And ah, we've been pretty successful ah, you know, it's been tough, cause there's a lot of other competition for these

funds and we'll have to be diligent over the next, particularly the next five or six years to be sure we have that funding there.

02:08:29

A:

We're now looking at some additional funding for the post cleanup stage. Which is ah, you know, going to come from different accounts. Some of it will be able to come from the Department of Energy. Some might come from some other departments and totally different appropriations bills.

02:08:46

A:

Ah, for instance if we do the park project we could be able to get some federal funding for that it would be very good. And I think there's some sources of funding that are outside the Department of Energy even that we could look to for that, particularly the Land and Water Conservation Fund.

02:09:00

Q:

What are some of the other ah, what are, what are some of the competitions for this funding?

A:

Well, every other site first (laughing). Because every site would like to have more money. And again we've been able to sell Fernald is give us adequate funding to get the job done quickly and we'll be success for you and then you can take what you've learned at Fernald and use it at these other larger often more complicated cleanup.

02:09:24

A:

Ah, but, you know, there, these huge sites like Hanford in the state of Washington, or Rocky Flats, Colorado ah, they can use a lot more funding and they would like more funding. Ah, second is the Department of Energy itself is often under fire for ah, spending too much money. Some people would like to eliminate the Department of Energy altogether.

02:09:41

A:

So the department itself um, has a hard time in Congress at least, ah, getting the funding that it requests. And usually its funding is reduced and that goes for everything else in the federal government.

02:09:53

A:

Ah, education, welfare, military, lots of good purposes. Um, so that's competition. Um, and within the Department of course they have different priorities they'd like to see. They have a big, most of the



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Department of Energy money is in renewable or um, research on, on new fuels that sort of thing. Solar, ah, wind, ah, geothermal, that sort of thing.

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02:10:19

A:

So they have, they have a lot of needs for funding within their own organization. Ah, in addition to cleanup. Although cleanup is the, I guess cleanup is the single biggest part of their budget. Ah, there are other people who believe in \_\_\_\_\_ that the cleanup ought to be shifted from the Department of Energy to the ah, Department of Defense. The DOD ought to handle these cleanups and that these were really military uses.

02:10:42

A:

And ah, I have opposed that in Congress and that's been an issue that is ongoing. And I think it'll be coming up again this year. Ah, I've opposed it because I believe that with regard to Fernald we now finally have focus and the expertise for the cleanup of a domestic site. Admittedly it was a military use but now it's a complicated cleanup like any other on our soil, in our neighborhoods.

02:11:07

A:

And the Department of Energy seems to have the best scientists, the best technology um, the best relationship with contractors who really do the cleanup um, of the agencies including DOD. So we would prefer to keep it, I would at least prefer to keep it at DOE for now. Although I understand that ah, there may be some overlap and there may be some inefficiencies by having DOD do some sites and DOE do other sites.

02:11:36

A:

Um, so those are some of the issues that come up. They're perennial that again, if we keep a pretty good success on and if we keep the focus on it we'll be okay through our cleanup phase.

(Off camera: statement directed to interviewee)

A:

Okay.

Q:

Great, I just have one more question for you actually. Um, why is the cleanup of Fernald so important to Ohio?

02:12:01

A:

Well, it's extremely important to people who live in Ohio and Indiana and Kentucky, you know, I think our whole area um, is at risk in terms of the environmental health effects from Fernald. Second, it's very important again to me as a model ah, if we can cleanup Fernald and do it right um, not get it behind us 'cause you could never get it all behind you, there will be people who have lasting health effects and they'll be needing to monitor and so on.

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02:12:30

A:

But, if we can get the cleanup behind us and get on to the stage of having the site be ah, reused for good purposes then it can help other sites to obtain that as well. Some like ours have radioactive waste, others have other kinds of hazardous waste and have no connection with the government, but ah, over the last couple of decades, really since the '70's I guess when we started cleaning these sites up there's been much less progress than most people would like to see. It's been very frustrating.

02:13:00

A:

And that's what we're trying to look at rewriting all of the um, provisions of law that relate to cleanups generally, not just the Fernald type cleanups. And, you know, if we could have some success here it could actually help with regards to those other cleanups. Um, so this is, it's important to the citizens of this area. It's important to our state and it's real important to our country to have a success here and to be able to show that by pulling together as a community, people with various stakes um, parties with various interests.

02:13:35

A:

That we can get the job done and that we can reach a consensus ah, to be able to achieve something good for our area. That's, that's a, that's a model not just a technology used but the process of getting there that can help other sites around the country.

Q:

Great, is there anything you want to add?

A:

No, just I'm glad you all are doing this.

Q:

Yeah, yeah, thank you so much. Um, we need to get nat sound. So if we could just have quiet on the set for about 30 seconds, we're gonna roll off a nat sound, then we'll be done.